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A

TRUE TALE

OF

ROBIN HOOD;

SETTING FORTH THE

LIFE AND DEATH

Of that Renowned Out-law

ROBERT, EARL OF HUNTINGTON,

VULGARLY CALLED

ROBIN HOOD.

Who lived and died A. D. 1198; *being the ninth Year of the Reign of King* Richard I. *Commonly called* Cœur de Lion.

Carefully collected out of the truest Writers of our Engliſh Chronicles; and publiſhed for the ſatisfaction of all who deſire to have truth from falſehood.

By MARTIN PARKER. Gent.

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THE

HISTORY

OF THE

LIFE AND DEATH

Of that Renowned Out-law

ROBERT, EARL OF HUNTINGTON,

VULGARLY CALLED

ROBIN HOOD.

BOTH gentlemen and yoemen bold,
Or whatever you are;
To hear a ſtately ſtory told,
Attention now prepare:
It is a tale of *Robin Hood*,
That I to you will tell;
Which being rightly underſtood,
I know will pleaſe you well.

This Robin (ſo much talk'd on)
Was once a man of fame,
Inſtiled Earl of Huntington,
Lord *Robert Hood* by name:
In courtſhip and magnificence,
His carriage won him praiſe,
And greater favour with his prince,
Than any in his days.

In bounteous liberality,
He too much did excel,
And loved men of quality,
More than exceeding well:
His great revenues all he ſold,
For wine and coſtly chear;
He kept three hundred bow-men bold,
He ſhooting lov'd ſo dear.

No archer living in his time,
With him might well compare;
He practic'd all his youthful prime
That exerciſe moſt rare;
At laſt, by his profound expence,
He had conſum'd his wealth;
And being out-law'd by his prince,
In woods he liv'd by ſtealth.

The abbot of St Mary's rich,
To whom he money ow'd;
His hatred to the Earl was such,
That he his downfal wrought;
So being out-law'd as 'tis told,
He with a crew went forth,
Of lusty cutters, stout and bold,
And robbed in the North.

Amongst the rest, one *Little John*,
A yeoman bold and free,
Who could (if it stood him upon)
With ease encounter three;
One hundred men in all he got,
With whom the story says,
Three hundred common men durst not
Hold combat any ways.

They Yorkshire woods frequented much,
And Lancashire also;
Wherein their practices were such,
That they wrought muckle woe;
None rich durst travel to and fro,
Tho' ne'er so strongly arm'd,
But by these thieves, so strong in shew,
They still were robb'd and harm'd.

His chiefeſt ſpite to the clergy was,
That liv'd in monſtrous pride;
No one of them he could let paſs,
Along the highway ſide;
But firſt they muſt to dinner go,
And afterwards to ſhift;
Full many an one he ſerved ſo,
Thus while he liv'd by theft.

No monks or friars he would let go,
Without paying their fees;
If they thought much to be uſed ſo,
Their ſtones he made them leave;
For ſuch as they the country fill'd
With baſtards in thoſe days;
Which to prevent thoſe ſparks did geld,
All that came in their ways.

But Robin Hood ſo gentle was,
And bore ſo brave a mind,
If any in diſtreſs ſhould paſs,
To them he was ſo kind,
That he would give and lend to them,
To help them in their need;
This made all poor men pray for him,
And wish he well might ſpeed.

The widow and the fatherleſs
He would ſend means unto;
And thoſe who famine did oppreſs,
Found him a friendly foe;
Nor would he do a woman wrong,
But ſee her ſafe convey'd;
He would protect with power ſtrong,
All thoſe who cray'd his aid.

The Abbot of St Mary's then,
Who him undid before,
Was riding with his two hundred men,
And gold and ſilver ſtore;
But Robin Hood upon him ſet,
With his courageous ſparks,
And all the coin by force did get,
Which was twelve thouſand marks.

He bound the abbot to a tree,
And would not let him paſs,
Before that (to his men and he)
His lordſhip ſaid a maſs.
Which being done, upon his horſe
He ſet him faſt aſtride,
And with his face towards it's a—ſe,
He forced him to ride.

His men were forc'd to be his guide,
For he rode backward home;
The abbot being thus vilify'd,
Did sorely chafe and foam:
Thus Robin Hood did vindicate
His former wrongs receiv'd;
For 'twas the covetous prelate,
That him of land bereav'd.

The abbot he rode to the king,
With all the haste he could;
And to his grace he every thing
Exactly did unfold:
And said if that no course was ta'en
(By force or stratagem)
To take this rebel and his train,
No man could pass for them.

The king protested by and by,
Unto the abbot then,
That Robin Hood with speed should die,
With all his merry men:
But ere the king did any send,
He did another feat,
Which did his grace much more offend.
The fact indeed was great.

For in a ſhort time after,
The king's receivers went
Towards London with the coin they got
For's highneſs' northern rent:
Bold Robin Hood and little John,
With the reſt of their train,
Not dreading law, ſet them upon,
And did their gold obtain.

The king much moved at the ſame,
And th' abbot's talk alſo,
In this his anger did proclaim,
And ſent words to and fro,
That whoſoe'er, alive or dead,
Could bring him Robin Hood,
Should have one thouſand marks well paid,
In gold and ſilver good.

This promiſe of the king did make
Full manya yœman bold,
Attempt ſtout Robin Hood to take,
With all the force they could:
But ſtill when any came to him,
Within the gay green wood:
And wanted for to ſpeak to him,
His men in order ſtood.

He ſhew'd to them ſuch martial ſport,
With his long bow and arrow,
That they of him did give report,
How that it was great ſorrow,
That ſuch a worthy man as he,
Should thus be put to ſhift;
Being of late a lord of high degree,
Of living quite bereft.

The king to take him more and more,
Sent men of mickle might;
But he and his ſtill beat them ſore,
And conquer'd them in fight.
Or elſe with love and courteſy,
To him he won their hearts;
Thus ſtill he liv'd by robbery,
Throughout the northern parts.

And all the country ſtood in dread
Of Robin and his men;
For ſtouter lads ne'er liv'd by bread,
In thoſe days, nor ſince then;
The abbot which before I nam'd,
Sought all the means he could,
To have by force this rebel ta'en,
And his adherents bold.

Therefore he arm'd five hundred men
With furniture complete;
But the out-law ſlew half of them,
And made the reſt retreat:
The long bow and the arrow-keen,
They were ſo uſed unto,
That ſtill he kept the foreſt green,
In ſpite o'th' proudeſt foe.

Twelve of the abbot's men he took,
Who came to have him ta'en;
When all the reſt the field forſook,
Theſe he did entertain,
With banquetting and merriment;
And, having uſed them well,
He to their lord them ſafely ſent,
And will'd them him to tell,

That if he would be pleaſed at laſt
To beg of our good king,
That he might pardon what was paſt,
And him to favour bring;
He would ſurrender back again
The money which before
Was taken by him and his men,
From him and many more.

Poor men might safely pass by him,
And some that way would chuse;
For well they knew, that to help them,
He evermore did use:
But where he knew a miser rich,
That did the poor oppress,
To feel his coin his hands did itch,
He'd have it more or less.

And sometimes when the highway fail'd,
Then he his courage rouzes;
He and his men have oft assail'd,
Such rich men in their houses;
So that thro' dread of Robin then,
And his adventurous crew,
The misers kept great store of men,
Which else maintain'd but few.

King Richard, of that name the first,
Sur-named *Cœur de Lion*;
Went to defeat the Pagans curst,
Who kept the coasts of Sion.
The bishop of Ely, chancellor,
Was the vice-roy here;
Who, like a potent emperor,
Did proudly domineer.

Our chronicles of him report,
That commonly he rode
With a thousand horse from court to court,
Where he would make abode:
He riding down towards the north,
With his aforesaid train;
Robin and his men did issue forth,
Them all to entertain.

And with the gallent grey goose wing,
They shew'd to them such play,
They made their horses kick and fling,
And down their riders lay:
Full glad and fain the Bishop was,
For all his thousand men,
To seek what means he could to pass
From out of Robin's ken.

Two hundred of his men were kill'd,
And fourscore horses good;
Thirty who did as captives yield,
Were carried to the green wood:
Which afterwards were ransomed
For twenty marks a man,
The rest set spurs to horse and fled
To the town of Warrington.

The biſhop ſore enraged then,
Did in king Richard's name,
Muſter up a power of northern men,
Thoſe out-laws bold to tame:
But Robin with his courteſy,
So won the meaneſt ſort,
That they were loth on him to try,
What rigour did import.

So that bold Robin and his train,
Did live unhurt by them,
Until King Richard came,
From fair Jeruſalem:
And then the talk of Robin Hood,
His royal ears did fill;
His grace admir'd that i' th' green wood
He was continued ſtill.

So that the country far and near,
Did give him great applauſe;
But none of them need ſtand in fear,
But ſuch as broke the laws:
He wiſhed well unto the king,
And pray'd ſtill for his health,
And never practis'd any thing,
Againſt his common-wealth.

Only becauſe he was undone
By the cruel clergy then;
All means that he could think upon,
To vex ſuch kind of men,
He enterpriz'd with hateful ſpleen,
In which he was to blame;
For fault of ſome to wreck his teen,
On all that by him came.

With wealth, which he by rob'ry got,
Eight alm-houſes he built;
Thinking thereby to purge the blot
Of blood which he had ſpilt;
Such was their blind devotion then,
Depending on their works;
Which if 'twere true, we Chriſtians
Inferior were to turks.

But to ſpeak true of Robin Hood,
And wrong him not a jot;
He never would ſhed any man's blood
That him invaded not:
Nor would he injure huſbandmen,
That toil at cart or plough;
For well he knew were't not for them,
To live no man knew how.

The king in perſon, with ſome lords,
To Nottingham did ride,
To try what ſtrength and ſkill affords,
To cruſh the out-law's pride;
And as he once before had done,
He did again proclaim,
That whoſoever would take upon
To bring to Nottingham.

Or any place within the Lands,
Rebellious Robin Hood,
Should be preferr'd in place to ſtand,
With thoſe of noble blood.
When Robin heard of the fame,
Within a little ſpace,
Into the town of Nottingham,
A letter to his grace

He ſhot upon an arrow head,
One ev'ning cunningly;
Which was brought to the king and read
Before his majeſty:
The tenor of this letter was,
That Robin would ſubmit,
And be true liege man to his grace,
In any thing that's fit.

So that his highneſs would forgive
Him and his merry-men all;
If not, he muſt i' th' green would live,
And take what chance did fall.
The king would fain have pardon'd him,
But that ſome lords did ſay,
This precedent will much condemn
Your grace another day.

While that the king and lords did ſtay,
Debating on this thing,
Some of the out-laws fled away
Unto the Scottiſh king;
For they ſuppos'd if he was ta'en,
Or to the king did yield,
By the commons all the reſt of ſtrain,
Full quickly will be quell'd.

Of more than full an hundred men,
But forty tarried ſtill,
Who were reſolved to ſtick to him,
Let fortune work her will;
If none had fled, all for his ſake
Had got their pardon free;
The king to favour meant to take
His merry men and he.

But ere the pardon to him came,
This famous archer dy'd;
His death and manner of the same,
I'll presently describe;
For being vex'd to think upon
His followers revolt,
In melancholy passion
He did recount his fault.

Perfidious traitors, said he then,
In all your danger past,
Have I you guarded as my men,
To leave me thus at last?
This sad perplexity did cause
A fever, as some say,
Which him into confusion draws,
Though in a stranger way.

This deadly danger to prevent,
He hy'd him with all speed,
Unto a nunnery, with intent,
For his health's sake to bleed.
A faithless fair did pretend,
In love to let him blood:
But be by falsehood wrought the end
Of famous Robin Hood.

The friar, as ſome ſay, did this
To vindicate the wrong,
Which to the clergy him and his,
Had done by power ſtrong;
Thus died he by treachery,
Who could not die by force;
Had he liv'd longer, certainly
King Richard, in remorſe

Had into favour him receiv'd,
He brave men elevated:
'Tis pity he was of life bereav'd,
By one that he ſo hated:
A treacherous leech this friar was,
To let him bleed to death;
And Robin was methinks an aſs,
To truſt him with his breath.

His corps the prioreſs of the place,
(The day next that he dy'd)
Caus'd to be bury'd (in mean caſe)
Cloſe by the high-way ſide;
And over him ſhe caus'd a ſtone
To be fix'd on the ground;
An epitaph was ſet thereon,
Wherein his name was found:

The date o' th' year, and date alſo,
She made to be ſet on there,
That all that by that way did go,
Might ſee it plain appear,
That ſuch a man as Robin Hood,
Was buried in that place!
And how he liv'd in the green wood,
And robb'd there for a ſpace.

It ſeems that tho' the clergy he
Had put to muckle woe,
He ſhould not quite forgotten be,
Altho' he was their foe!
This woman tho' ſhe did him hate,
Yet lov'd his memory;
And thought it a wond'rous pity that
His fame ſhould with him die.

His epitaph as records tell,
Within theſe hundred years,
By many was diſcerned well,
But time all things out-wears:
His followers, when he was dead,
Were ſome receiv'd to grace;
The reſt to foreign countries fled,
And left their native place.

And though his funeral was but mean,
This woman had in mind,
That his fame ſhould be buried clean,
From thoſe that came behind:
For certainly, before nor ſince,
No man e'er underſtood,
Under the reign of any prince,
Of one like Robin Hood.

Full thirteen years and ſomething more,
Theſe out-laws lived thus,
Fear'd of the rich, lov'd of the poor,
A thing moſt marvellous:
A thing impoſſible to us,
This ſtory ſeems to be:
None dares be now ſo venturous,
But times are chang'd we ſee,

We that live in thoſe latter days
Of civil government,
(If need be) have an hundred ways
Such out-laws to prevent.
In thoſe days men more barbarous were,
And lived leſs in awe;
Now, God be thanked, people fear,
More to offend the law.

No roaring guns were then in uſe,
They dreamt of no ſuch thing;
Our Engliſhmen in ſight did chuſe,
The gallant grey gooſe wing;
In which activity theſe men,
Through practice were ſo good,
That in thoſe days none equall'd them,
Eſpecially Robin Hood.

So that it ſeems keeping in caves,
In woods and foreſts thick,
They'd beat a multitude with ſtaves,
Their arrows did ſo prick:
And none durſt near unto them come,
Unleſs in courteſy;
All ſuch he bravely would ſend home
With mirth and jollity.

Which courteſy won him ſuch love,
As I before have told;
'Twas the chief cauſe that he did prove
More proſperous than he would:
Let us be thankful for theſe times
Of plenty, truth, and peace;
And leave our great and horrid crimes,
Leſt they cauſe this to ceaſe.

I know there's many feigned tales,
Of Robin and his crew,
But chronicles, which ſeldom fail,
Report this to be true:
Let none then think this is a lie,
For if 'twere put to the worſt,
They might the truth of all deſcry,
In th' reign of Richard the firſt.

If any reader pleaſe to try,
As I direction ſhew,
The truth of this brave hiſtory,
He'll find it true I know:
And I ſhall think my labour well
Beſtow'd to purpoſe good,
When't ſhall be ſaid, that I did tell
True tales of Robin Hood.

The EPITAPH which the Prioress of the Monastry of Kirkslay *in* Yorkshire, *set over* Robin Hood, *which (as before mentioned) was to be read within these hundred years, though in old broken English, much to the same sense and meaning*

Decembris quarto Die, 1198. Anno Regni *Richardi*, Primi IX.

ROBERT, Earl of Huntington,
Lies under this little stone;
No archer was like him so good.
His wildness nam'd him *Robin Hood*.
Full thirteen years and something more,
These northern parts he vexed sore,
Such out-laws as he and his men,
May England never know again.

Some other superstitious words were in it, which I thought fit to leave out.

FINIS.